

VZCZCXRO8185

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DE RUEHRK #0037 0511545
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
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FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3989
INFO RUCPDO/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 0039
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0020
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 0061

UNCLAS REYKJAVIK 000037

C O R R E C T E D COPY (SUBJECT)

STATE FOR OES LISA PHELPS AND MAGGIE HAYES AND EUR/NB
USDOC FOR NMFS CHERI MCCARTY
TOKYO FOR BART COBBS
COPENHAGEN FOR ESTH HUB

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [EFIS](#) [KSQA](#) [PREL](#) [IWC](#) [ETRD](#) [IC](#)

SUBJECT: ICELANDIC MINISTER CONFIRMS COMMERCIAL WHALING DECISION STANDS

REFS: A) Reykjavik 36 B) Reykjavik 25

11. (U) This is an action request, please see paragraph 4.

12. (SBU) Minister of Fisheries Steingrímur J. Sigfússon announced on February 18 that his predecessor's controversial increase in whaling quotas for fin and minke whales will stand at least for this year (reftels). Ministry of Fisheries Head of the International Office and Iceland's Commissioner to the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Stefan Asmundsson confirmed for Econoff that no actual quotas have been issued yet; quotas are devised by the annual scientific recommendations of the Icelandic Marine Research Institute (MRI) on sustainability and that information is not expected until late spring. However, Asmundsson said that one could make an educated guess on the numbers of the quota based on advice from previous years. (Note: Using the older MRI information, this would mean a quota of 150 fin whales and 100 minke whales. End Note.) Asmundsson said the whalers do not have authority to start whaling until the quota is issued, but are probably making their preparations using the same educated guesses.

13. (SBU) The Director of Iceland's Nature Conservation Association (an anti-whaling NGO), Arni Finsson told Econoff that he appreciated the strong language in the letter presented by the Ambassador and other representatives of the international community, but stressed that more was needed (Ref A). He cited the 26 signatories to the letter denouncing Iceland's 2006 decision to continue whaling and related fin and minke whale quotas. Finsson said that the potential quota of 150 fins and 100 minkes this year was worse than the 2006 quota of nine fins and 30 minkes, and the response should reflect that increase. He mentioned that the British supermarket chain Waitrose had sent a letter to the Icelandic authorities this week highlighting that their customers are not pro-whaling. Finsson said more responses like that would help pressure the Icelandic authorities. He said more European Union members and IWC members from South America should be approached about signing any joint international response.

14. (SBU) Action Request and Comment: Post believes a further response is necessary following the reaffirmation of the objectionable quota. We request U.S. authorities issue a public statement deploring the decision as soon as possible. We also recommend that we either seek additional signatures to the letter delivered last week in Reykjavik, or production of another one with at least the same number of countries signed up as did in 2006.

